

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded and that the nominations be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF RICHARD STENGEL TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY.

NOMINATION OF SARAH SEWALL TO BE AN UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE (CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS)

NOMINATION OF CHARLES HAMMERMAN RIVKIN TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS).

NOMINATION OF SLOAN D. GIBSON TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk reported the nominations of Richard Stengel, of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy; Sarah Sewall, of Massachusetts, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights); Charles Hammerman Rivkin, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic and Business Affairs); and Sloan D. Gibson, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that any time in quorum calls be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I come to the floor to talk about three highly qualified nominees for very significant posts at the Department of State.

The Foreign Relations Committee, which I am privileged to chair, has moved 48 nominees through the committee this year alone. I am pleased these three will move, but I would like to express my concern about the remaining nominees. They are critical to us promoting our foreign policy and our national interests and security interests abroad. I urge my colleagues to support movement of these nominees to the floor as quickly as possible.

There are three today.

Richard Stengel has more than 30 years of experience as an author and journalist. He brings a very unique perspective to his role as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, on which we will be voting.

He has served as the managing editor of Time magazine during the past 7 years, demonstrating his impressive managerial capabilities.

As president and CEO he led the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, where he led public education efforts to raise awareness about our Nation's founding charter and the values enshrined in it.

This public diplomacy role is incredibly important in a world that is constantly getting closer and smaller by virtue of the mass media, the Internet, and all of the different forms of communication. Our advocacy in public diplomacy is incredibly important to get our message out as the United States in terms of our bilateral and multilateral pursuits.

Dr. Sarah Sewall has been nominated to serve as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. She comes to this position with significant relevant experience. She taught at the Naval War College and served as a director of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. She is highly regarded as an expert on mass-atrocity prevention and response. She is now a senior lecturer in public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Her large portfolio includes a range of issues, including challenges to civilian security in Latin America; Syria's growing refugee problem, which is a concern for us in terms of the entire region and our good ally—Jordan, for example; counterterrorism; counter-narcotics; human trafficking; and women's issues. These are all incredibly important in the pursuit of our foreign policy.

I am confident Dr. Sewall will be an excellent Under Secretary, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

Finally, we have Ambassador Charles Rivkin's deep experience in the private sector and clear talent for managing large organizations which position him well to take on the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs.

At a time when our country is pursuing the most ambitious trade agenda in generations and our companies and workers are facing tougher and more aggressive competition than ever before, Ambassador Rivkin has demonstrated the skill and the experience needed to lead the State Department's participation in formulating and implementing international economic policies aimed at protecting and advancing U.S. economic, political, and security interests.

Particularly at a time in which we are seeking to create more jobs here at home, our advocacy abroad to open markets, to have transparency, to have the rule of law for our companies that do invest abroad, to ultimately ensure that when they make such decisions, if there is a violation of their contracts, they have a transparent judicial process in which they can litigate their judicial issues are not only incredibly important to our companies' investments abroad but to the jobs created at home that promote the products and services we generate across the globe.

I urge my colleagues to support these nominations in pursuit of the national interest and security of the United States.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent to yield back all time on both sides, including the 2 minutes prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Richard Stengel, of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 8, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 27 Ex.]

YEAS—90

Alexander	Blumenthal	Burr
Ayotte	Blunt	Cantwell
Baldwin	Booker	Cardin
Barrasso	Boozman	Carper
Begich	Boxer	Casey
Bennet	Brown	Chambliss

Coats	Isakson	Portman
Cochran	Johanns	Pryor
Collins	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Coons	Johnson (WI)	Reid
Cornyn	Kaine	Rockefeller
Cruz	King	Rubio
Donnelly	Kirk	Sanders
Durbin	Klobuchar	Schatz
Enzi	Landrieu	Schumer
Feinstein	Leahy	Scott
Fischer	Levin	Sessions
Flake	Manchin	Shaheen
Franken	Markey	Stabenow
Gillibrand	McCaskill	Tester
Graham	McConnell	Thune
Grassley	Menendez	Toomey
Hagan	Merkley	Udall (CO)
Harkin	Mikulski	Udall (NM)
Hatch	Moran	Walsh
Heinrich	Murkowski	Warner
Heitkamp	Murphy	Warren
Heller	Murray	Whitehouse
Hirono	Nelson	Wicker
Hoeven	Paul	Wyden

NAYS—8

Crapo	McCain	Shelby
Inhofe	Risch	Vitter
Lee	Roberts	

NOT VOTING—2

Coburn	Corker.
--------	---------

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SEWALL NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Sewall nomination.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. TOOMEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, shall the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sarah Sewall, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights)?

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 28 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Coats	Harkin
Ayotte	Cochran	Hatch
Baldwin	Collins	Heinrich
Barrasso	Coons	Heitkamp
Begich	Cornyn	Heller
Bennet	Crapo	Hirono
Blumenthal	Cruz	Hoeven
Blunt	Donnelly	Inhofe
Booker	Durbin	Isakson
Boozman	Enzi	Johanns
Boxer	Feinstein	Johnson (SD)
Brown	Fischer	Johnson (WI)
Burr	Flake	Kaine
Cantwell	Franken	King
Cardin	Gillibrand	Kirk
Carper	Graham	Klobuchar
Casey	Grassley	Landrieu
Chambliss	Hagan	Leahy

Lee	Paul	Stabenow
Levin	Portman	Tester
Manchin	Pryor	Thune
Markey	Reed	Toomey
McCain	Reid	Udall (CO)
McCaskill	Risch	Udall (NM)
McConnell	Roberts	Vitter
Menendez	Rockefeller	Walsh
Merkley	Rubio	Warner
Mikulski	Sanders	Warren
Moran	Schatz	Whitehouse
Murkowski	Schumer	Wicker
Murphy	Scott	Wyden
Murray	Sessions	
Nelson	Shaheen	

NAYS—1

Shelby

NOT VOTING—2

Coburn	Corker
--------	--------

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. REID. Madam President, we are going to have one more recorded vote. We think we will have another vote that will not be recorded, but it will be a voice vote and that will be the last vote tonight.

I am totally aware of the weather prediction, that we might get some snow tomorrow night. We will see what happens midday tomorrow and find out how much snow the weather forecasters are predicting, if any.

Tomorrow around 11:30 a.m. we are going to have a series of votes. The floor staff will be working on what the votes will be, and I will be discussing that with Senator MCCONNELL.

We have one more vote tonight and we have a series of votes tomorrow at 11:30 a.m.

VOTE ON RIVKIN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Rivkin nomination.

Mr. REID. I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has been yielded back.

Under the previous order, the question occurs on the Rivkin nomination.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Charles Hammerman Rivkin, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

The result was announced—yeas 92, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 29 Ex.]

YEAS—92

Alexander	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Baldwin	Grassley	Murphy
Barrasso	Hagan	Murray
Begich	Harkin	Nelson
Bennet	Hatch	Paul
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Portman
Blunt	Heitkamp	Pryor
Booker	Heller	Reed
Boozman	Hirono	Reid
Boxer	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Brown	Inhofe	Sanders
Burr	Isakson	Schatz
Cantwell	Johanns	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Scott
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Chambliss	King	Stabenow
Coats	Kirk	Tester
Cochran	Klobuchar	Thune
Collins	Landrieu	Toomey
Coons	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Corker	Lee	Udall (NM)
Cruz	Levin	Vitter
Donnelly	Manchin	Walsh
Durbin	Markey	Warner
Enzi	McCain	Warren
Feinstein	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Fischer	McConnell	Wicker
Flake	Menendez	Wyden
Franken	Merkley	

NAYS—6

Cornyn	Moran	Roberts
Crapo	Risch	Shelby

NOT VOTING—2

Coburn	Rubio
--------	-------

The nomination was agreed to.

VOTE ON GIBSON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Gibson nomination.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, today I wish to speak in strong support of the nomination of Sloan Gibson to serve as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Before I speak about Mr. Gibson's qualifications, I believe it is important that my colleagues understand the realities that Mr. Gibson will face if confirmed. He would be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Department charged with operating the Nation's largest integrated health care system and providing a variety of benefits and services to America's veterans, as well as their dependents and survivors.

It is also no secret the Department of Veterans Affairs faces a number of challenges. We know it takes VA too long to issue claims decisions. We know it takes the Board of Veterans' Appeals too long to decide appeals. We know VA and the Department of Defense have spent years on an integrated electronic health record with very little to show for their efforts. We know VA has difficulty managing major construction projects; and we know far too many veterans still do not know about the benefits and health care for which they are entitled. These are the just some of the challenges awaiting Mr. Gibson and highlight the need for this body to move quickly to confirm Mr. Gibson for this important vacancy.

All too often, VA's challenges can cast a large shadow over the things

that VA does well. I think it is also important to acknowledge the amazing things VA is accomplishing each and every day. For instance, patient satisfaction at VA medical centers remains high throughout the country as does the quality of care veterans receive. VA has taken an aggressive stance on homelessness by pursuing the ambitious goal of eliminating veteran homelessness by 2015 and continues to make significant progress in reducing the number of veterans living on the street. Finally, the VA continues to make significant advances in health care through its world-class research programs.

These are the realities and the challenges facing any nominee for a leadership position at the Department. I firmly believe Sloan Gibson is uniquely qualified to address these challenges. Mr. Gibson has a history of service to this Nation that has provided unique insights into the challenges confronting the servicemember and veteran communities. Mr. Gibson began his service as a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1975 and went on to serve as an infantry officer, earning airborne and ranger qualifications during his military service. His service to this country, however, did not end when Mr. Gibson left military service. He continues this tradition of service today by leading the United Service Organizations, commonly known as the USO, which has the important mission of lifting the spirits of America's troops and their families.

I feel the relationships Mr. Gibson has developed with the Congress and senior leaders within the Department of Defense during his tenure at the USO will serve him well as Deputy Secretary. Collaborative efforts between VA and DOD such as the Integrated Electronic Health Record and Integrated Disability Evaluation System have the potential to make the delivery of benefits and services much more efficient and to provide servicemembers with a smooth transition to civilian life. Yet, these efforts continue to face significant challenges. VA needs a Deputy Secretary like Sloan Gibson who will be able to provide the leadership attention necessary to ensure continued and meaningful collaboration between the Departments.

Sloan Gibson also has the business experience, gained from service in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, necessary to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Following military service, Mr. Gibson spent 20 years serving in a number of positions within the banking industry. This service included 11 years as an executive at AmSouth Bancorporation. He retired from AmSouth in 2004 as vice chairman and chief financial officer.

Sloan Gibson's tradition of service, business experience, and educational qualifications make him well suited to manage the day-to-day operations of

one of this Nation's largest Cabinet Departments. I am confident that if confirmed Mr. Gibson's service as Deputy Secretary would improve the lives of America's veterans and their families and as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee I look forward to working with Mr. Gibson to do just that.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting today to confirm the nomination of Sloan Gibson to serve as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sloan D. Gibson, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MODERNIZING CUBA POLICY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, today the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin American Center released a new, bipartisan public opinion survey on Americans' views about U.S. policy toward Cuba which should be read by every Member of Congress. The findings of this thorough and wide-ranging poll will surprise many. For instance, not only do Floridians—and Cuban-Americans in Florida—favor new policy approaches, but they do so in even larger numbers than do Americans in other regions of the Nation.

It is time—past time—to modernize our policies and the frozen-in-time embargo on Americans' travel and trade with Cuba that have accomplished nothing but to give the Cuban regime a scapegoat for the failures of the Cuban economy. Change will come to Cuba, but our policies have delayed and impeded change. It is time to elevate the voice of a crucial stakeholder: the American people. Thanks to this poll, they are silent no longer.

It is time to recognize that U.S. policy toward Cuba has been unsuccessful in achieving any of its objectives. There is no disagreement among Amer-

icans on both sides of the issue about the desire for a government in Cuba that respects individual liberties. We want to see freedom of expression in Cuba, just as we want to see American citizen Alan Gross, who has been imprisoned there for more than 4 years, come home. The disagreement is over how best to achieve that.

Just about the only beneficiary of our embargo has been Cuba's current regime.

The poll shows that a solid majority of Americans, including Cuban-Americans, favor a different course.

Trade with Latin America is the fastest growing part of our international commerce. Rather than isolate Cuba with outdated policies, we have isolated ourselves. Our Latin, European and Canadian friends engage with Cuba all that time. Meanwhile, U.S. companies are prohibited from any economic activity on the island.

This new detailed survey paves the way for a policy toward Cuba that is in the national interest of the United States as a whole. That is what the country needs, it is what the American people have made clear they want, and it is the responsibility of the White House and the Congress to act.

Let us have the common sense, and the courage, to finally put an end to the Cold War in our own hemisphere.

In this same spirit of bipartisanship as this public opinion poll, Senator JEFF FLAKE and I joined together in writing a guest column about the compelling reasons to change these antiquated policies. Our piece appeared today in the Miami Herald. I call it to the attention of the Senate, and I invite other Senators to join in re-examining and changing our self-defeating approach in our relationship with Cuba and the Cuban people. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Miami Herald, Feb. 11, 2014]

TIME FOR A NEW POLICY ON CUBA

(By PATRICK LEAHY and JEFF FLAKE)

We are in the fifth decade—more than half a century—of our country's embargo toward Cuba. During that time the Soviet Union has ceased to exist. Apartheid in South Africa has ended. We have re-established diplomatic relations with the communist governments of China and Vietnam. Still, the United States has refused to reexamine the political and economic embargo on Cuba.

A majority of Americans, including Cuban-Americans, wants to change course. So do we.

A new public opinion poll commissioned by the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center and carried out by a team of highly respected pollsters from both sides of the aisle shows a stark contrast between current American attitudes and the archaic U.S. embargo.

A solid majority of Americans from every region and across party lines supports normalizing relations with Cuba. When asked about specific elements of the policy—such as undoing the ban on travel by Americans to Cuba, facilitating financial transactions,